

## Project Schedule Update

- » **Winter 1999:** Final environmental and engineering studies and initial traffic forecasts completed on refined alternatives
- » **Spring 1999:** Final traffic forecasts and cost estimates. Detailed evaluation of refined alternatives
- » **Summer 1999:** 2nd round of public meetings and workshops; final evaluation report
- » **Fall 1999:** Preferred alternative report; recommend adoption into regional plan.

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## Six Conceptual Alternatives Identified After Initial Evaluation

### Alternatives for the I-10 West Corridor

The Texas Department of Transportation, El Paso District (TxDOT) is moving forward with a Major Investment Study (MIS) of the 23-mile I-10 West Corridor from the New Mexico State Line to US Highway 54. The MIS is a comprehensive study that will result in a recommended strategy to meet the short- and long-term transportation needs of the Corridor.

TxDOT's study team led by consultant Parsons Brinckerhoff, has narrowed the conceptual alternatives under consideration to six, which include the No-Build, the Transportation System Management (TSM), I-10 Express Lanes, Doniphan/Paisano, Arterial 1/Tunnel, and Localized Improvements. These

alternatives are currently undergoing detailed development and performance evaluation.

The No-Build and TSM are baseline MIS alternatives required to remain throughout the study. The No-Build Alternative consists of the existing transportation system and committed improvements that are planned and approved. The TSM Alternative consists of the No-Build plus operational efficiency improvements to the existing transportation system without major capacity improvements or capital investment. Example improvements are, coordinating traffic signals, reconfiguring I-10 ramps, and adding turn lanes at major intersections. These two alternatives serve as baseline comparisons for

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## Alternatives for the I-10 West Corridor Continued from page 1

the performance and impacts of the other four build alternatives. Diagrams of the four build alternatives are located on the insert page.

**The I-10 Express Lanes Alternative** would add express lanes on I-10 separating through traffic from local traffic from Resler Drive to US 54. The limited access express lanes would be separated by barriers or placed on elevated structure. One general purpose lane in each direction would also be added from the New Mexico State Line to Resler.

**The Doniphan / Paisano Alternative** would provide a continuous parallel route to I-10. Doniphan would be improved to a four-lane barrier separated controlled access facility with a westbound (one-way) access road. An interchange with Paisano and a connection to the Border Highway would provide an alternative freeway facility benefiting east and west El Paso.

**The Arterial 1/Tunnel Alternative** would provide an alternative corridor connecting west to east El Paso. North of Executive Center Blvd., the alternative would connect Paisano, I-10, and Mesa before crossing the Franklin Mountains through a tunnel to Fred Wilson Road.

**The Localized Improvements Alternative** would improve traffic circulation and access by connecting neighborhoods and widening high traffic streets. The alternative includes continuous frontage roads on I-10 from Mesa (west) to Executive Center Blvd., Stanton Road extension, Bartlett to Southwestern connection, Southwestern to Northwestern connection, Schuster extension to Paisano, Transmountain Road widening between I-10 and the Franklin Mountains State Park, and right-turn only lanes on Mesa Road from I-10 west to Executive Center Blvd., with grade separated interchanges at Resler and Sunland Park. This alternative can be

## TxDOT and Sun Metro Work Together

Over the last few months, the study team and Sun Metro, El Paso's mass transit provider, have held several meetings to review existing corridor transit service and discuss possible transit improvements. As part of the MIS process, public transportation options are being developed that will be combined with the roadway alternatives to improve the efficiency of the transportation network along the I-10 West Corridor.

Existing bus routes and transit centers, planned fleet expansion and improvements, and expected future changes in service demand are being reviewed. This information is being used to determine future bus service needs and possible corridor transit options.



One option being considered is implementing high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes on I-10 West. HOV lanes are dedicated lanes for vehicles carrying more than one person. Buses would be able to travel more quickly on I-10 using an HOV lane, allowing express bus services to and from downtown El Paso.

The expected travel demand for each alternative is being analyzed to determine whether it will result in improved traffic conditions. Sun Metro and transit considerations will remain an integral part of the MIS review and preferred alternative selection process.

considered in combination with the corridor-wide alternatives.

These conceptual alternatives are being refined and will be evaluated and compared based on performance, environmental impacts, and cost. A preferred alternative will be recommended based on the evaluation results. The preferred alternative could be a combination of investment strategies (i.e. the TSM with Doniphan/Paisano plus the Localized Improvements Alternatives). This summer, a second round of workshops and public meetings will present the evaluation results and the recommended preferred alternative for public review and comment. Once the public has reviewed and commented, the recommended preferred alternative will be revised

and reevaluated, if appropriate. The final preferred investment strategy will be recommended to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for adoption into their regional plan.

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**[www.dot.state.tx.us/mis/mis.htm](http://www.dot.state.tx.us/mis/mis.htm)**

» **Catch the latest developments concerning the I-10 West Corridor Major Investment Study.**

» **Use the electronic feedback form to give us your two cents.**

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# Socioeconomic and Environmental Components Overview

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## Existing Environmental and Socio-economic Conditions

Environmental studies for the I-10 West MIS have been underway for several months. TxDOT has been collecting information on the Corridor's environmental and socio-economic components to understand the existing conditions of the area. This will be used as a basis for evaluating the potential impacts of the six alternatives being considered in the study. Descriptions of some of the study findings include:

### Ecological Resources

Biologists have analyzed species that are listed as threatened or endangered by state or federal law. Five threatened or endangered species were identified as likely to occur in the study area, based on habitat types present. These include the Southwestern willow flycatcher, American peregrine falcon, interior least tern, Sneed's pincushion cactus and the swift fox. It should be noted that the study biologists have not seen any species present during their investigations. TxDOT policy is to avoid threatened and endangered species habitat whenever possible.

Wetlands in the study area have also been identified. The floodplain of the Rio Grande supports some arroyos and other depressions that hold water after heavy rains, creating wetland habitat. In addition, a wetland has been identified near Doniphan Road and Frontera Road, west of I-10. Federal and state policies require the protection, preservation, and enhancement of the nation's wetlands.

The Hueco-Mesilla Bolson Aquifer systems, located in El Paso and Hudspeth counties, are another area of concern. Minor land-surface subsidence has occurred in the city of El Paso because of past large-scale ground water withdrawals.

### Socio-economic Conditions

This analysis examines population, workforce, and income levels in the Corridor. These socio-economic conditions are important in determining where future population and employment growth is expected, and therefore where increased traffic is expected.

A large majority (69%) of residents in the Corridor study area are persons of Hispanic heritage. In addition, areas with the highest incomes in the Corridor and within El Paso are generally within a two-to four-mile radius of the

Mesa/Doniphan/Country Club intersection. Areas of the Corridor with the lowest incomes are situated along the Rio Grande south of downtown El Paso near the international bridges.

The Corridor's population is expected to increase 68% between 1990 and 2020 from 159,583 to 268,647. Most of that growth is expected to occur in the Northwest sector of the Corridor, with minor population growth in El Paso's central area. The total Corridor work force is expected to grow 28% between 1990 and 2020 from 102,081 to 130,650. Most of that growth will also occur in the Northwest sector of the Corridor, with projections of a 74% increase in jobs in that sector during the same period. This will result in a continuous increase in the Corridor's travel demand.

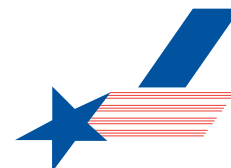
### Cultural Resources

Cultural resources include archaeological, historical, architectural sites and places of special importance to traditional cultures. El Paso County has one of the longest periods of human occupation in North America. It was first occupied approximately 11,000 years ago by prehistoric nomadic big-game hunters. Since then it has been occupied by other prehistoric peoples, and in the recent historic period by Spanish, Mexican, Apache, Comanche, and Anglo people.

Within the current urban limits of El Paso, and particularly in the downtown area, historic period archeological deposits are present in many locations. Archeological sites and architectural or structural elements that are at least 50 years old may be considered cultural resources. The I-10 West Corridor has 21 resources on the federal National Register of Historic Places, five state protected archaeological properties, 78 city historic landmarks, seven historic districts, and numerous other cultural resources that may be eligible for federal or state protection. Any major expansion of the present I-10 West Corridor or development of alternative routes in this area has the potential to affect these cultural resources.

These environmental issues will be considered in developing and evaluating MIS detailed alternatives. Since the alternatives are being developed at the same time as the environmental analysis is being performed, any potentially significant environmental impact may be avoided or mitigation developed to negate the impacts.

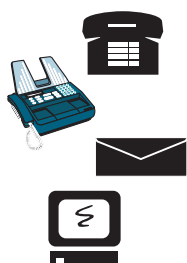




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Please help us improve transportation in your community by sending us your ideas and comments. We want to hear from you. Comments and questions can be addressed to Texas Department of Transportation project staff:

**Project Manager** - Judy Ramsey  
(Advance Transportation Planning Administrator)

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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